

## *Credit, and Belief*

As students often like to ask about extra credit, I thought I'd share a few thoughts at the beginning of our year, rather than the final pressed days of a grading period or semester, when extra credit requests often feel appeals for mercy after jobs that have previously been overlooked. In any case, save for the last week of a grading period or term, I'm always happy to grant extra credit, as long as we can appreciate and agree upon the value of the term, and the process it involves.

Those of you taking Latin may already have learned that the word *credit* has its roots in the word **credere** (to believe); also, **creer** in Spanish. Others of you might have heard the word **credo** ("I believe") in religious or other settings. And even if you've never thought about it in this way, a "credit" card is basically an agreement of **belief**: the merchant *believes* that the bank will transfer money from your bank account after your swipe; and the bank *believes* that you will ultimately pay back the money you've temporarily borrowed from them for the transaction.

### **In short, think of CREDIT as BELIEF.**

Now, particularly in light of our discussions about the habits of good academic citizenship, what would it mean to earn extra **credit**, extra **belief**? Think about it this way: if you do something that seems of value to your work in this course -- and the ways in which this course might connect more broadly to your lives -- then find a way to explain what it is you've done, and why you think that might have value. In other words, do **YOU** yourself **believe/credit** the merits of the work or activity that you've chosen to take on? And can you find a way to help **ME** believe, in turn, in those merits? I'm generally an easy sell on such matters, once I hear you express that belief in the process and the payoff in your own words.

So, some thoughts for extra credit activities, happy to entertain any others that you feel would contribute -- like the books you've been reading -- to your cultural awareness as a young citizen.

**\*See a Performance** (*FAIR*, W&L, VMI, SVU productions, Shakespeare Theater in Staunton)

**\*Listen to a Concert** (could be contemporary music, could be classical)

**\*Attend a Festival** (local arts festivals, cultural heritage festivals)

**\*Go to a Museum** (here in Lexington, in Staunton/ Roanoke/ Charlottesville, or on family trip)

**\*Write a Movie Review** (needs to be **APPROVED BY ME** as a film that's relevant to our course)

### **BE CREATIVE IN YOUR CHOICE AND RESPONSE.**

Then, all you need to do is to **write a CREDIBLE 6-8 SENTENCE PARAGRAPH** explaining **what you saw or did**, and most importantly, describing **what you got out of it**:

*What did/didn't you **like** about it?* (a **credo** doesn't necessarily mean being a **fan** of something)

*What felt **new** or **familiar**?*

*What did it add to your **understanding** or **appreciation**?*

*How might this **advance your study of English**?*

Anything you hand in to me **one week before the end of a given marking period**, I will be most happy to consider, to have a conversation with you about, and to credit you accordingly.

And for the further satisfactions of personal belief and value, share your interests and instincts with friends and family, and bring them along too!